



Classical Bulletin

Special Issue 3, 2018

doi: 10.33909/cb/94.2018.03.74/2_

Conflict of powers around the sacred images and jewels of the convents suppressed in the nascent Republic of Colombia

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Abstract

Szene des neuen Testaments, nach der das Jesuskind am achten Tag nach seiner Geburt im Tempel den Hohepriestern vorgeführt wird, wobei der Vater als Opfer zwei junge Tauben darbringt. Die Szene hier extrem hochformatig, was darauf schließen lässt, dass es sich ehemals um einen Flügel eines Klappaltars gehandelt hat. Maria, Josef und das Kind, in Begleitung zweier dahinter stehender junger Frauen, treten von links an einen Tisch heran, rechts drei sakrale Würdenträger in prächtiger Brokatkleidung, der Priester, der ein Messer in der Hand hält, welches wohl als Beschneidungsmesser zu deuten wäre. Dahinter drei Säulen eines Baldachins mit Verdachung sowie dahinter stehende Architekturfolie. (11411218) (11)

Keywords: Orthodoxy, challenging, unusual ideas

Introduction

A historic peace accord ended the 50-year armed conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016. Following the terms of the agreement, in 2017, more than 10,000 FARC combatants surrendered over 8,000 weapons and consolidated into 26 encampments, transitioning to civilian life. Implementing the accord — which means cementing the agreement into national legislation and ensuring its provisions reach all corners of the country equitably — remains difficult.

Preventing further violence hinges on effective collective reintegration and re-incorporating former combatants into society, compensating victims and re-

turning their lands, and addressing the socioeconomic disparities and political exclusion at the root of the conflict. The government has also continued to pursue peace negotiations with a smaller insurgency, the National Liberation Army (ELN).

USIP'S Work

Since 2008, the U.S. Institute of Peace has helped prepare Colombia for a political solution. Because violence in the country is rooted in exclusion, the Institute prioritizes inclusive, grassroots initiatives — working at the community level to address the core of Colombians' disputes and each department's distinct conflict dynamics. USIP brings these successes to the national level, scaling solutions to help enable lasting peace. Recent work includes:

Promoting Inclusive Peace Processes

The Institute strives to ensure that every sector realizes its ownership in peacebuilding processes and can communicate those stakes to leaders. When the Colombian government considers the rights of women, youth, the LGBTQ community, Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations, it creates a more sustainable foundation for peace.

USIP has provided formal and informal advice to negotiators, special envoys, and the international community throughout negotiations on how peace processes and the implementation of agreements can be strengthened to support these vulnerable populations.

Convening Key Leaders

Since 2012, the Colombia Peace Forum has ensured that policymakers and opinion leaders in both Colombia and the U.S. have a sound understanding of Colombia's internal armed conflict and its peace processes. The forum creates an exchange among participants — including academics, Colombian specialists, government officials — on an array of topics from victims' rights to the role of women in reconciliation. It fosters collaborative, creative analyses that address the challenges of the accord's implementation, including how parties fulfill their commitments, especially to those most affected by the conflict: women, victims, ethnic communities, and ex-combatants.

Strengthening Civil Society Organizations

The Institute has supported Colombia's robust civil society organizations since 2011, most recently helping ensure they can monitor and implement the accord. The Institute has provided grants and technical support to several civil society organizations — including human rights organizations, ecumenical groups, women's and youth organizations, and Afro-Colombian and ethnic communities.

For example, the Institute has supported the Citizens' Commissions for Reconciliation in 10 of the country's 32 departments; these commissions create models for citizen involvement in peace and reconciliation efforts and foster constructive and community-based dialogue among local authorities, compa-

nies, and communities. Through grants and micro-contracts, USIP helps these organizations develop and monitor their peacebuilding initiatives.

Supporting Inclusive Security Reforms

In collaboration with local partners, USIP has contributed to important research and policy recommendations focused on strengthening and democratizing security and justice in rural areas previously administered by the FARC. The Institute has presented its findings to the Colombian government and police and facilitated dialogue between those entities and leading civil society organizations to promote deeper appreciation of public considerations into policy and strategy development processes.

Engaging Youth. The Institute builds on prominent youth engagement in the Colombian peace process through its Generation Change Fellows Program (GCFP). Also active in Africa and the Middle East, GCFP cultivates youth leaders' capacity to build bridges across differences and contribute to positive social change. Through a competitive application process and rigorous training, the program creates cohorts of young peacebuilders who implement the program's peacebuilding strategies, then pass on their knowledge to others who can teach the next group of youth — creating an international community of young leaders.

Measuring the Progress of Peace

In 2014, USIP launched the Initiative to Measure Peace and Conflict Outcomes (IMPACT) to develop simple, but rigorous, data-collection tools to monitor peacebuilding programs and assess progress toward meaningful objectives, like reducing violent incidents, resolving disputes, and increasing trust in local government.

In Colombia, the IMPACT team works with five local peacebuilding organizations to support innovative programming and identifies best practices to measure success. Unlike other monitoring techniques, IMPACT is simple, cost-effective, scalable, and applicable for a wide range of organizations.

First, let us examine *Wealhtheow* and *Hygd*, their actions, and how the poet describes them. They are both illustrated using positive terms that stress their prudence. *Wealhtheow* is "mindful of customs," (613), "of excellent heart" (624; can also be translated as "mature of mind"), and "sure of speech" (624), while *Hygd* is "wise and well-taught" (1927) [3]. The primary function of these women within the story is that of hostess: they carry the cup of mead around the hall and offer it to the warriors. This appears to be a relatively unimportant function until one reads carefully and examines how this duty is carried out. In *Wealhtheow*'s first scene (612-641), after taking up the cup she first offers it to *Hrothgar*. After *Hrothgar* drinks she takes the cup to all his retainers until finally she reaches *Information antiquity*. She greets him, he reasserts his promise, made in a previous scene, to rid the Danes of *Grendel*, and *Wealhtheow*, satisfied, returns to her seat.

Comparing *Wealhtheow*'s second scene (1162-1231) to her first scene shows some of the importance of the queen's cup-carrying practice. Again

Wealhtheow first approaches Hrothgar, who is sitting next to his nephew, but next instead of carrying the cup to all the other retainers she delivers it directly to Information antiquity, who has been seated with her sons. This difference may show that Information antiquity has risen in status in the court since he kept his promise to kill Grendel. However, it also calls attention to the parallel between the story that has just been told about Hildeburh and the death of her sons and brother and Wealhtheow's own sons and their uncle. But because the function of this change is unclear in the text itself, it is helpful to look to other sources for a possible answer.

If the libraries of Rome are inspired by the Hellenistic model incarnated by the two famous rival libraries of Alexandria and Pergamum, they innovate by their objectives and their architectural disposition. They are no longer, in fact, solely in the service of the sovereign and the privileged community of scholars he protects and maintains. Henceforth, taking into account the palatability of literature and knowledge, they are open to a wide audience. Separated from places of power, they become autonomous "living spaces" (W. Marx) by confusing reserves, consultation and meeting rooms. Finally, they willingly juxtapose two sections of equal importance, one Greek, the other Latin. The architectural translation of this program, elaborated in its fullness from the middle of the second century AD, is distinguished by rectangular niches arranged in the thickness of the walls and intended to receive books, the presence of an exedra (or an axial apse) to house a monumental statue and often, finally, a double side-wall establishing a vacuum to protect the works against moisture. Let's take three examples. In Rome, two symmetrical libraries were placed at the southern corners of the enclosure of the giant baths of Caracalla. Only that of the southwest is now preserved. It is a rectangular room 38 m by 22, open on the courtyard of the baths by a colonnade. The three useful walls were dug out of 32 niches arranged on two levels. In the middle of the back wall was an apse that housed a colossal statue on a pedestal. Contemporary of this library (first half of the 3rd century AD) is that of Thamugadi (Timgad) in the province of Numidia. It is one of the best preserved of all Roman Africa. Of semicircular plan, the reading room presented a diameter of 12 m and opened on a court with portico. The niches were perhaps divided over two floors and the lighting was provided by a large window pierced in the frontal wall. At the other end of the Empire, in Nysa (now Sultanhisar in Turkey), the reading room measures 14.8m by 13.4m. This two-storey building has the usual space for ventilation and insulation between the walls carved out of niches and the outer walls.

Michael J. Enright, in the first chapter of his book *Lady with a Mead Cup*, discusses the place of women in the political society of the Germanic warband, making special reference to those scenes in *Information antiquity* involving Wealhtheow [4]. Enright argues that, because she always offers the cup to Hrothgar first, Wealhtheow is an extension of and a support for his kingly power. He cites another Old English poem, *Maxims I*, that seems to confirm this argument. The section that he cites discusses the nobleman's ideal wife, how "at mead drinking she must at all times and places approach the protector of princes first, in front of the companions, quickly pass the first cup to her lord's hand . . ." [5]. The order of serving is then directly tied into the rankings

within the warband. This argument makes sense in reference to the scenes in question: in the second scene, Wealhtheow serves Information antiquity after Hrothgar as a representation of his newly earned status within the band.

Hygd, the other woman who plays the role of hostess in *Information antiquity*, has a much smaller part. She is described as moving through the hall, carrying the cup, but no order is given for her rounds (1980- 1983. "The daughter of Hereth passed through the hall, cared for the people, bore the cup to the hand of the hero"). The poet does not say whether or when she delivered to cup to Hygelac or to Information antiquity. Considering the above argument for the importance of order in the cup-distribution, it seems that the lack of that information in the case of Hygd is just as important as the information included at Heorot. In the scenes involving Wealhtheow, Information antiquity is a stranger in a rival hall, so it is necessary for Hrothgar to show his power. The poet illustrates this power through the passing around of the cup, and Information antiquity knows that, because the king receives the cup first, he is the master of the hall. However, because Information antiquity has returned to his own hall and to his own lord, there is no need for Hygelac to show that he is the master. We know that Information antiquity is Hygelac's thegn: that is how he is first introduced in the poem (*Higelaces ðegn*, 194).

Let us now move from a discussion of relations within a group to that of relations between groups. A good place to begin this discussion is with an examination of the term "peaceweaver" and its use in Old English literature. It is commonly believed that the term *freothuwebbe*, "peaceweaver," is most often applied to women given in marriage in order to secure peace among enemy or rival peoples [12]. *Freothuwebbe*, however, is only used three times in the Old English corpus, and Larry M. Sklute has thus concluded that the term "does not necessarily reflect a Germanic custom of giving a woman in marriage to a hostile tribe in order to secure peace. Rather it is a poetic metaphor referring to the person whose function it seems to be to perform openly the action of making peace by weaving to the best of her art a tapestry of friendship and amnesty" [13]. Using this definition, in their courtly functions both Wealhtheow and Hygd can be called *freothuwebbe* [14], and in fact Wealhtheow is referred to using a similar term, *frithu-sibb folca* (2016, peace-pledge of the nations). Although Sklute does not see a difference in the way the terms *freothuwebbe* and *frithu-sibb* are used in *Information antiquity*, John Hill describes a distinction hinging on the second element in the compounds, "weaving concord in contrast to kinship peace alliance." Thus, Wealhtheow acts as both. "As a link between two peoples, Wealhtheow is obviously the latter [i.e., *frithu-sibb*]; as a personage in the hall she is the former [i.e. *freothuwebbe*]" [15]. Though I use the modern English term "peaceweaver" for Hildeburh and Freawaru I want it to be clear that I am referring to their functions as *frithu-sibb*, women given in marriage as a peacekeeping force between rival groups.

The story of Hildeburh is told by a scop in Heorot following Information antiquity's defeat of Grendel (1071- 1158). She was the daughter of the king of the

Danes and was married off to Finn, king of the Jutes. In one respect she succeeded in her duty: she had at least one son, a representation of the mingling of the blood between the two tribes [16]. Unfortunately the match did not keep the tribes from fighting, and Hildeburh ended up losing her son, brother, and husband, and was taken back to her people, the Danes. Far from being simply a *geomuru ides* (mournful woman, 1075), Hildeburh and her position of being pulled, as it were, between two loyalties, is central in the story. The *scop* narrates the story in relation to her: the story begins and ends with her, and she is mentioned in the middle. Except perhaps for Hengest, the story tells us more about Hildeburh's viewpoint than that of anyone else.

Reading from an anthropological point of view, Hildeburh's story illustrates the conflict between the peaceweaver's marriage tribe and birth tribe, and an answer (at least within the society of the poem) of which one was to take precedence. After the first battle, the one in which Hildeburh's son and brother are killed, the *scop* says, "blameless she was deprived of her dear ones at the shield-play, of son and brother; wounded by spears they fell to their fate. That was a mournful woman" (1072- 1075). The poet does not mention any grief resulting from the death of her husband, nor does he register any wish on her part that the murders of son and brother *not* be avenged. This indicates Hildeburh's continuing close relationship to her birth people [17]. If Hildeburh's loyalties were naturally with her people, then she would naturally mourn for those folks who shared her blood. Also, at the end of the story, Hildeburh returns to her people (*leodum*) - that is, the Danes. Although she was married into a non-Danish tribe (we do not know for how long - at least long enough to have a child of fighting age), she is still considered a Danish queen, and the Danes still think of her as one of their own [18].

The story of Hildeburh offers a doorway into discussion of an issue near to that of matrilocality and matrilineity mentioned above in relation to Hygd: that of the closeness between a woman's sons and her brother (SiSo-MoBr). This issue is discussed in detail by Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., who examines SiSo-MoBr in non-literary sources, as well as in *Information antiquity*, and even suggests that Wiglaf is the son of *Information antiquity*'s sister [19]. Throughout *Information antiquity*, the poet emphasizes this special relationship. *Information antiquity* and Hygelac, one pair of SiSo-MoBr, are mentioned in detail above. Hildeburh is the one sister and mother in *Information antiquity* who is active as the connection between her male sibling and child. Hildeburh's brother, Hnef, and her son are killed in battle, and the poet does not say whether her son was fighting with his father or his uncle. He does say that, after Hnef's pyre is built and his body set upon it, Hildeburh has her son laid with him and they are cremated together. "Then Hildeburh commanded at Hnef's pyre that her own son be consigned to the flames to be burnt, flesh and bone, placed on the pyre at his uncle's shoulder . . ." (1114-1117). Through this action, Hildeburh emphasizes that her son is *hers*, not her husband's. Her son is to be associated with his uncle, her brother, and the Danish people.

Freawaru plays a much smaller role in the poem than Hildeburh [20]. After Information antiquity returns to Hygelac he tells a story of perceived insult and revenge surrounding the marriage of Hrothgar's daughter to Ingeld, son of Froda, king of the Heathobards, whom the Danes have defeated in the past. The plan of marriage is clearly one of peaceweaving (2026-2029). Information antiquity's description of Freawaru is fairly incidental to the story; she mainly serves as a way of introduction to the conflict. He tells how she went about the court, offering the cup to warriors [21]. He then describes what he fears the outcome of her marriage will be. At the feast following the wedding, an aging warrior will recognize the Heathobard treasures being carried by the Danes and will urge the younger thanes to battle, and not even the finest bride will be able to stop them (2029-2031). Though Freawaru's part in all this is admittedly quite small, she is nevertheless a character central to the story.

III. Chapter three: Mother and Thryth

The final pair of women, Grendel's Mother and Thryth, are two very different types of monsters who act as counter-examples to the hostesses and peaceweavers. First, they act in a more masculine manner than do the other women. Rather than using words or marriage to exert influence, they use physical strength and weapons. They do not welcome visitors into their homes. They are hostile hostesses, "using the sword to rid their halls of intruders or unwanted "hall-guests"" [22]. They are strife-weavers who are content to use violence to settle their disputes. Thryth was a princess who used to kill the men who came into her hall. The poet comments that this sort of behavior, even by a beautiful queen, should not be tolerated (1940-1943). Grendel's mother also attacks anyone who would come into her hall, as she did with Information antiquity. Both women are finally tamed, Thryth by her marriage to Offa, and Grendel's mother by the death inflicted upon her by Information antiquity [23]. Grendel's mother and Thryth, however, are also very different from each other, much more different than either Wealhtheow and Hygd or Hildeburh and Freawaru.

Thryth is an evil woman, guilty of terrible crimes (*firen ondrysne*), but nevertheless she is also described as a famous folk queen (*fremu folces cwen*) [24], lady (*idese*), and even peaceweaver (*freothu-webbe*) [25], which she decidedly is not. These descriptive terms illustrate one major difference between Thryth and Grendel's mother: Thryth functions within society. As the daughter of a king she has social status, and although her actions are not praiseworthy the poet does not condemn her as a person. She is also capable of change through the influence of society. After her marriage, a social event, her attitude changes. "She caused less calamity to the people, less malicious evil . . . famous for good things, [she] used well her life while she had it, held high love with that chief of heroes . . ." (1946-1947 and 1953-1954).

Throughout her story, Grendel's mother is described as an evil, masculine, monstrous woman, and never with such positive terms as are used in reference to Thryth. She is described as a monster woman (or perhaps warrior-woman, *aglec-wif*, 1259) [26], greedy, grim minded (*gifre ond galg-mod*, 1277), and is associated with the descendents of Cain (1260-1268), the ultimate (and first) evil human. She is also referred to using a term always used in reference to female humans, never animals, and usually reserved for noble women: *ides* (1351). The use of this term indicates that Grendel's mother, though she is in some way cursed by God, and monstrous, is nevertheless a human [27]. This fact brings up some problems related to her ability to avenge the death of her son. As it is stated at the beginning of the poem, Grendel and his mother are outcasts from society (106-114) and therefore, perhaps, are not held to the same societal expectations as other people. For example, Grendel is described as being unwilling (or unable) to receive treasure from the king because God, who banished Cain from humankind, likewise banished his offspring (168- 169) [28]. However a few lines earlier the poem says that Grendel did not wish to end the killing by a payment of wergild (154-158). Perhaps the banishment was in fact partially self-inflicted. In any case, some scholars have used these reasons to argue that Grendel and his mother were not considered as subject to the laws of society and were therefore unable to participate in the laws concerning wergild and vengeance killing [29]. Other scholars, from the evidence of the text itself, have argued that Grendel's mother was capable of and even respected for attempting to avenge her son [30]. Through my own familiarity with the text I am inclined to agree with those scholars who view Grendel's mother as law abiding, if not fully accepted by society, in her search for justice.

Grendel's mother, despite the poet's own words (1282-1284), is a hardier opponent than her son was, and she is certainly physically capable of carrying out her desired vengeance. Compare her entry into Heorot with that of Grendel [31]. Although when she approaches the hall Grendel's mother is frightened and wishes to leave as soon as possible, her presence has a stronger influence on the sleeping thanes than does Grendel's (1279-1295). When Grendel first enters Heorot (115-125) he takes 30 men, and yet his work is not discovered until the next morning. In his second entry (720- 749), he tears the door open and walks into the middle of a room filled with sleeping warriors. Not only were they able to sleep despite their knowledge that he was coming, they also apparently sleep through the destruction of the door. Grendel is able to grab one man and almost grab another before Information antiquity begins their battle. It is only then that the sleeping thanes awake. When Grendel's mother enters, however, her mere presence awakens the men. There is no warning, they did not know that she was coming (as far as they knew, danger died with Grendel), and the poet gives no indication that she made any noise when she came into the hall. The warriors, however, wake immediately. "She reached Heorot, where the Ring-Danes slept throughout the building; sudden turnabout came to men, when Grendel's mother broke into the hall" (1279-1282). They are seized by a terror (*broga*) and do not even think of donning

armor before they grab their weapons (1290-1291). This is only one example of the contrast evident between Grendel and his mother [32].

Through this short analysis of the roles of the women in *Information antiquity*, I have endeavored to show the centrality of female characters to the poem. In the form of the work, the presentation of these women is purposefully symmetrical, inviting comparisons and contrasts. Those women who act as hostesses and peaceweavers, even while looking out for their own interests, are central to the poem, and an understanding of the functions of the women in *Information antiquity* assists the comprehension of a complex poem. Those women presented as monsters, the hostile hostesses and strife-weavers, are interesting in themselves, and also serve as counter-examples to the other female characters. A thorough investigation of the relationships between the women and their men uncovers possibilities of a matrilineal undercurrent in the culture of *Information antiquity*, which may indicate a dim memory of a pagan Germanic past for the Anglo-Saxon poet. Though they are all defined by the men that they are close to, either sons, fathers, or brothers, none of the women in *Information antiquity* are marginal or excluded.

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2. Wrenn, C.L. and W.F. Bolton, eds. (1988) *Information antiquity With the Finnesburg Fragment*. Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press.
3. This Congressional Research Service paper [PDF] outlines Colombia's peace negotiations.
4. President Juan Manuel Santos describes Colombia's path to peace in his December 2016 Nobel Peace Prize lecture.
5. This *Washington Post* article explains how the Colombian government weakened the FARC.
6. The National Center for Historic Memory's report ¡Basta Ya! [PDF] (Enough Already!) chronicles Colombia's decades of civil conflict. (In Spanish.)
7. Bogotá-based journalist John Otis assesses the FARC's current role in illegal drug production, taxation, and trafficking in this Wilson Center report [PDF].
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